



GENDERED ROLES IN YAM CULTIVATION AND FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION



- Food security has till date not been achieved in many parts of West Africa and there is a growing literature that suggests lack of gender equity in food production processes partly accounts for this
- Yam is an important food and cash crop for most families in West Africa. Nigeria and Ghana produce about 83% of the crop in West Africa (Amusa et al., 2003).
- Yams are also a valuable component of root tubers which have been recognised as immense contributors to food security in Asia, Africa and the world. They are a direct source of income, access to household food supply and they lead to a reduction in imported food (Scott, 2000 & Armah et al, 2010).
- Despite the importance of yam for food security and income, research and support for yam production has been limited thus exacerbating the challenges and

of an integrated crop management approach using selected yam viral and nematode disease control measures, combined with improved agronomic practices in reducing seed yam losses and increasing yam productivity.

Data is from baseline quantitative survey of 720 households and mid line focus group discussion with men and women farmers in eight communities all in Ghana and Nigeria where the CAYSEED intervention was implemented

FINDINGS

- CAY-Seed found that food security of household is the biggest factor facilitating seed yam production (66%).
- Different roles are played by men and women in the various stages of the production of seed yam and yam farming in general

YAM PLANTING STAGES	ACTIVITIES BY MEN	ACTIVITIES BY WOMEN
Land Preparation	Clear the land and prepare the mounds	NONE
Seed Preparation	Cut the seeds, treat them and dry them for planting	Carry the seeds to the farm
Planting	Make the mounds, dig the holes, put the seeds in it and cover it	Place the seeds on the mound, collect and prepare the sticks for staking
Fertiliser Application and Spraying	Do both activities all the time	Fetch water for spraying
Weed Control	Men spray and dig out weeds	NONE
Harvesting	Men dig out the yams	Collect the dugout yams from the farm
Storage	Men control storage and count the quantities	Women carry yams to the storage space
Transportation	Men assist women if needed	Women carry yams to market or sale points
Marketing	Wholesaling of yams	Retailing of yams

- “it is generally believed that women don't have the strength to do the mounding for example, it is from our ancestors. CAYSEED has helped us now we can do most of the activities”(Source: FGD Participant, Nyinase- Ghana)
- Fewer women farmers in yam. Preference in grains-maize, sorghum and millet – belief of engaging in these activities –for men deterred them from farming yam. Only alternative is to hire labour- high cost results in smaller farm sizes and hence smaller yield
- There is improved yam planting techniques from mounds and single pole staking to ridges and trellises. The latter techniques are not identified as belonging to men in yam cultivation



- Women farmers realized that there is a difference between sex and gender
- The mid line survey points to an increased size in the yam farm sizes of women farmers

CONCLUSION



- The introduction of modern trends and practices as under CAY-SEED has resulted in higher involvement of women in traditionally unacceptable areas of yam production.

- It is expected that women will even be willing to go commercial with the hope of assistance to overcome the various challenges enumerated.
- Other underlying constraints though remain unresolved:
- Land acquisition is a problem for

the farmers- price being charged for hiring land is continuously increasing.

- Cost of hiring labourers to work on their farms
- Access to credit
- Access to farm inputs
- There are also some non-financial challenges- bushfires, changes in the pattern of rainfall in recent times



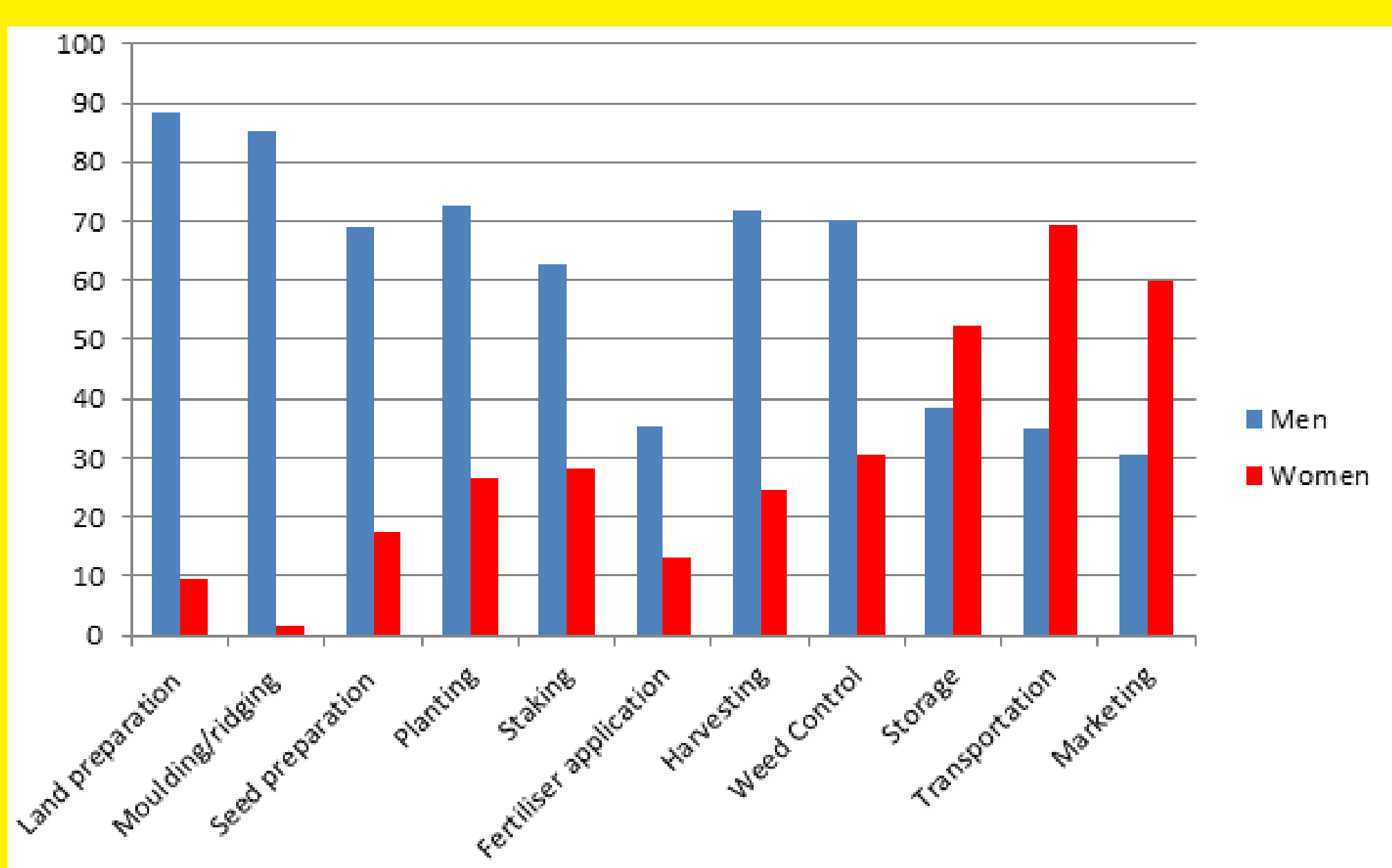
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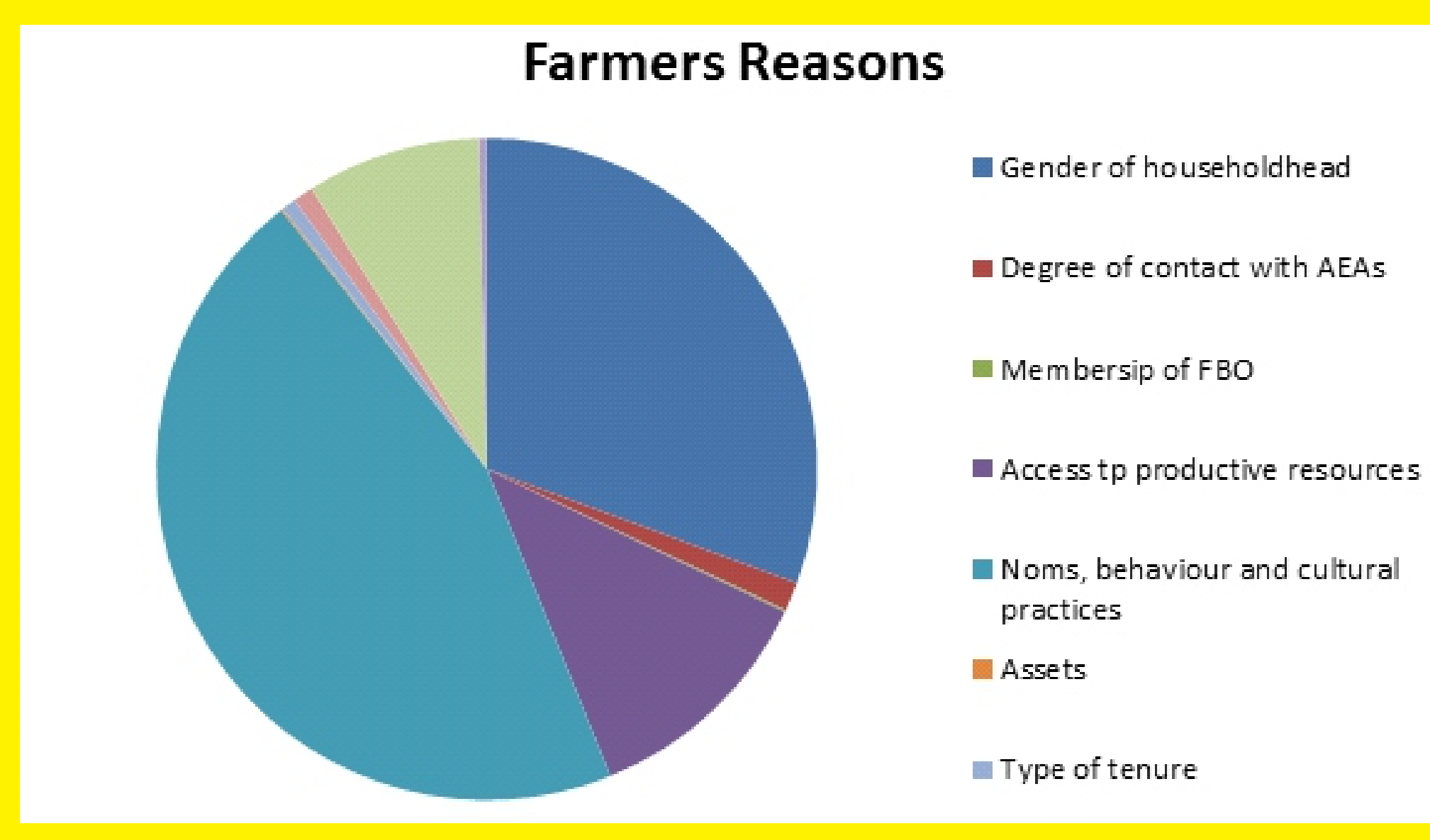


- Men perform more roles than women as seen in the graph below



- There is a strong view that yam is a “male” crop

- The roles are gender based in yam production is mostly situated in the norms, behaviours and in cultural practices of the communities and the farmers attest to this



RESEARCH PROBLEM

- Though women have been recognized as food producers especially at the household level, they still face limitations (Aidoo, et al, 2012)
- Gendered divisions of labour and lack of equity in access to inputs and technology related to food production, explains the differences in yields between women and men farmers and determines the benefit to families and communities
- Interventions that enable women and men to meet the long term nutritional needs of their households would enhance food security

RESEARCH AIM

- This paper uncovers the issues surrounding the limitations women face in yam farming in West Africa

METHODOLOGY

- The Community Action for improving farmer-saved Seed Yam (CAY-Seed) project sought to test the effectiveness

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